

ISSUE # 19

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BAAM

Boston Anti-Authoritarian Movement
A General Anarchist Union in the Boston Area



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Another Factory Closed, Another Labor Law Ignored

by Paul

On January 14, 2009, the jewelry factory Colibri in East Providence announced it was closing, and that this would be the last payday for employees. The next day, 240 workers were locked out from the factory, in violation of the Federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN Act). The WARN Act requires employers to provide at least 60 days notice to employees if a plant is closing, or if there will be a mass layoff. The employer must also alert the state's Dislocated Workers Unit, and "appropriate unit of local government" (Department of Labor). The penalty for violating

J.D. White, refused to comment on Founders Equity's role in violating the WARN act.

Here is a short recent history of the Colibri Group, which was in direct control of the factory. In 2005, the company sold a majority share of itself to Founders Equity, which is a private investment firm in New York City with capital control of over \$160 million under its management. During this time the factory was still producing at full capacity, with no layoffs of its 240 factory workers and 60 traveling sales representatives. According to Business Week online, in July of 2008 the Colibri Group had completed "financing that

included an equity investment by the company's major shareholder and simultaneous recapitalization of its bank lines," while also looking forward to further growth. It is logical to assume that in December of '08, during the throes of the banking crisis, Founders Equity decided it would be more profitable to close Colibri and sell off its products to pay back the \$28



Workers rally outside Colibri on March 19 to protest the auctioning off of the the goods that they made to help pay off creditors. The protest was successful in disrupting the auction, as only 25 people showed up to the actual bidding session.
Photo by Gretchen Erti from the Providence Journal.

this act is back pay and benefits for each employee affected, and a civil penalty of \$500 for each day of violation.

Colibri workers were given no notice other than through e-mail on the 14, and a posted notice on the 15. Laura Heart, supervisor of the communications department of the Rhode Island State Dislocated Workers Unit said, "We only received word of the plant closing after the fact," adding that this was in "early February," almost a month after the workers had been shut out. Here are two violations of the WARN Act. The only chance for exemption is "unforeseeable business circumstances," so the burden of proof falls upon the controlling company, Founders Equity of NYC. When called for comment on this, Diane Greely, assistant to Founders Equity partner

million it owes to the two banks: HSBC and Sovereign Bank. This takes us to January '09, when the Rhode Island Supreme Court folded to Founders Equity's request to put its subsidiary, Colibri Group, into Federal receivership under the control of Allan Shine, an attorney with a long history of dealing with receiverships in Rhode Island. It is at this point that we see Mr. Shine come to the decision to auction off products the workers had made to pay off the debt that executives had acquired. Had they acted within federal law, they could have taken whatever came from the auction to provide back pay and benefits to the 240 Colibri plant workers who were locked out and laid off from their jobs.

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The BAAM Newsletter

is the monthly publication of the Boston Anti-Authoritarian Movement, a general union of Boston anarchists. Our publication aims to spread anti-authoritarian ideas and practices, and to report on the social struggles of workers, tenants, students, radicals, and others resisting the repression of the state, bosses, landlords and banks.

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The workers and their community were not just going to stand by and do nothing in the face of this violent economic assault against them. The workers started to meet. Between 75 and 150 workers showed up to organizing meetings. According to labor organizer Justin Kelly, "this group of people are the most inspiring group of people I have met in a long time, maybe in my whole life. They are people who have gone from living their everyday lives and working to having a great injustice foisted upon them. The majority of them decided not to take this laying down. They have organized themselves to fight back and get what's theirs." They started by picketing outside of the factory in the beginning of February, raising awareness of the crimes committed by the company. These actions continued when workers stood up in state court to say, "The banks are insured and have plenty of money. Step aside, and give us workers what we deserve." They took the fight to the lair of the criminals, in New York City's financial district where 75 workers and supporters protested in Founders Equity's lobby, demanding a meeting with the controlling partners. As cowardly as it was predictable, the partners refused to meet with them. These workers and supporters then visited John Teeger's house on Long Island, to alert his neighbors to what kind of person Mr. Teeger is.

On Thursday March 19, the day that the products of the workers were going to be auctioned off, 200 workers, community members, and supporters gathered outside the plant to protest this theft of their labor. In the words of Alda Bonin, a Colibri worker "We feel that we want the money...what they're saying is that the banks are going to get paid first. The workers should get paid first, not the banks." With signs and banners reading, "Rise together, Stay together," workers and supporters picketed outside until auctioneers began to arrive. At that point, different members of the Northeast Federation of Anarchist-Communists (NEFAC), Jobs for Justice, and Colibri employees started to lay down in front of the different Mercedes, BMW's and Audi's. They came in three different groups, and were supported by a loud anarchist marching band and the cheers of their comrades. Overall, 13 people were arrested, the majority of them women and Latin@s, as well as two NEFAC members, and many Colibri workers. According to police Capt. Dennis Charbonneau, they were all charged with disturbing the peace for refusing to move and were released later in the afternoon. Auctioneers expected 150 people, but only around 25 showed up to the auction, showing the effectiveness of the organizers' action. According to Justin Kelly,

"These workers feel empowered to continue their resistance."

Now we ask, who is to blame for these workers losing their jobs and for the law being violated? Why aren't the workers getting any sort of compensation for this abrupt termination, including those who worked there for 20+ years? Founders Equity, which owned the Colibri Group, filed the motions in court to put the company into receivership. It is because the company was put into receivership that these working people were locked out, and refused money and benefits promised to them by Federal law. These people

have names and addresses.

Here are the names of the Partners in control of Founders Equity Warren H. Haber, Partner (212) 829-0900 ext. 1

John Teeger, President (212) 829-0900 ext. 2
John D. White, Partner (212) 829-0900 ext. 3 or his assistant Diane (212) 554-3457

Call to let them know how you feel, let their phones ring off the hooks so they cannot get business done. Together we can start to put pressure on them to get just compensation for the workers of Colibri.

To get involved with organizing, or to stay updated, e-mail Juice@nefac.net

Dating Violence: Too Normal to be Alarming

by Adrienne

I live my life in a way that keeps me almost entirely shut off from popular entertainment media. I had no idea who Chris Brown and Rihanna were before media analyses on their case were posted on feministing.com. In case the rock you live under is heavier and darker than mine, the famous pair, 19 and 21, are/were intimately involved and Brown publicly beat the bloody fuck out of Rihanna in February. Same shit, different day, now with more god-awful media coverage! Because modest numbers estimate that men commit domestic violence against 1 in every 4 U.S. women, myself included, my impulse is to mourn the loss of Rihanna's privacy during what is already a shit-tastic time in her life, and to respectfully file her away in my brain as part of the same painful statistic. Enter the Boston Public Health Commission. Between February 13th and 20th, they surveyed 200 Boston youth, ages 12-19. Brace yourself for their findings.

71% : arguing is a normal part of relationships

44% : fighting is a normal part of relationships

51% : Chris Brown was responsible

46% : Rihanna was responsible

52% : both were to blame for the incident, despite knowing that Rihanna had been beaten badly enough to require hospital treatment

35% : the media were treating Rihanna unfairly

52% : the media were treating Chris Brown unfairly

It always hurts my head when journalists and individuals talk about intimate partner

violence as some sort of tragic, fucked up anomaly. Tragic and fucked up, yes, but culturally and statistically? It's as normal as blue jeans. Looking at the survey results, is it any wonder it's so hard for us to walk away from unhealthy relationships? Antagonistic interpersonal dynamics are expected, even encouraged by the dominant culture. If everyone we know thinks that it's totally fine to scream at, humiliate and emotionally abuse one's lover, it's not much of a stretch to justify and defend physical and sexual abuse, which are only a few gradations away on the spectrum of intimate violence.

As anarchists, our attention is frequently, and rightfully, drawn to political and economic institutions wreaking disaster and havoc upon the world and its denizens. These institutions are easier to target, since they have websites, buildings and contact information. But we can't neglect to examine the extreme, and often invisible, forms of violence in our own intimate relationships, which operate along the same paradigms of dominance and oppression. I would love to see us take part in more open discussions about our interpersonal relations, intimate and otherwise.

It is, after all, an unequivocally bad idea to try to tell someone else, unsolicited, that they're in a fucked up relationship; it breeds resentment and frequently strengthens the bond between the abuser and the abused. Alerting ourselves to the power dynamics in all aspects of our lives can only be productive in our quest toward a better world.

Abolish The 'Stock Market'

A Brief Analysis of the Depression

by James Herod

It is obscene and insane that a few ten thousand very rich persons (multi-millionaires and billionaires) can, by placing bets (gambling) in the world's stock exchanges (casinos), artificially jack up, within months, the price of rice, wheat, corn, and other food staples, thus forcing a billion or more people to the very edge of starvation. Obviously, such an abominable situation should not exist.

So you'd think there would be a great clamor to abolish the stock market. But then, you'd think that there would be a

clamor to abolish the CIA also, which is an absolute evil, and the Pentagon, an equally absolute evil, as well as Hollywood. But as big and bad as these outfits are, they are nothing compared to the biggest abomination of them all—capitalism, including its nation-state system. (While we're in the abolishing mode, let's abolish money, which would get rid of all these evil institutions in one fell swoop.)

The current financial meltdown we're in is just an artifact of capitalism, and it certainly can't be explained without taking this system into account, although plenty of people are trying to do just that. The most popular explanation says that those Wall Street bankers are just too damned greedy.

So what's going on? I have pieced together the following sketch of the crisis from the writings of our radical social philosophers and historians who have studied the matter: scholars such as John Bellamy Foster and Fred Magdoff, most importantly, but also Immanuel Wallerstein, Michael Hudson, Michel Chossudovsky, Doug Henwood, and Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, among many others.

To begin with, we are in the early stages of a major depression. This is not a typical brief recession, but a deep, long-lasting, systemic,

global depression. It may last a decade. There will be massive unemployment. Hundreds of thousands of businesses will go bankrupt. Maybe a hundred thousand nongovernmental organizations will shut down for lack of funding. Millions will lose their homes. Millions more will lose their pensions. Malls will stand deserted. Poverty will increase dramatically. Millions more people will starve to death in

the poorer countries.

A depression is when the so-called economy contracts significantly, maybe by

as much as 10-15%. That is, "growth" stops. Growth of what? Capital accumulation. Capital cannot find ways to continue to expand. That is, rich people cannot find ways to invest their surplus money which will yield sufficient profit. When the rate of profit falters, crisis ensues. General panic sets in amongst "investors" (people who make money off money). Capitalism – a system for accumulating capital for the sake of accumulating capital – requires incessant growth (new products, new markets), which is why it is often likened to a cancer, and why it must be eradicated.

As it happened, capitalism has a cyclical aspect. It grows for thirty years or so and then stagnates for roughly thirty more years, with the cycle ending in a depression. And so it has been for five hundred years. The years of stagnation stem from the increasing difficulty of keeping the rate of profit up through the

production of goods and services. The built-up productive capacity outstrips demand. If goods and services don't sell, no profit can be realized, and there is no point in making further investments in the "real economy." So the people who own surplus capital shift over to financial speculation in an effort to keep the profits flowing in. This process is entirely normal to the system.

This is what has been happening again recently. There was a stagnating economy combined with an over-abundance of capital with nowhere to go, so the rich turned to gambling, in a rigged game which yielded enormous profits for a while to those in the know. But now the casino has gone belly up, the system has crashed, and a depression has commenced.

Historically, after a depression, the cycle starts over again. There is some disagreement among radical scholars, however, as to whether the cycle will restart this time in the usual way and continue on as before. Wallerstein, for example, believes that capitalism has reached barriers to its continued growth which it will not be able to overcome and that the system will be gone within twenty to forty years. Most analysts do not go this far, some even claiming that the idea that capitalism *continued on next page...*

...so the rich turned to gambling, in a rigged game which yielded enormous profits for a while to those in the know. But now the casino has gone belly up, the system has crashed, and a depression has commenced.





Famous picture of a car for sale following the 1929 stock market crash. Recently reprinted on the cover of the *Wall Street Journal*.

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will self-destruct is nonsense.

There is general agreement, though, that the current crisis has distinctive features which make it different from all preceding ones. For one thing, there is the sheer volume of the surplus capital that is sloshing around the world looking for "investment opportunities." We're talking about tens of trillions of dollars, much of it changing hands overnight. Also, with high-speed computers, million-dollar bets can be placed which last only a few minutes. Very little of this betting now takes place in the stock market per se. Most of it is done in the commodity, bond, and currency markets, and through over the counter betting.

Plus, in recent years, the gamblers have invented a whole basketful of new ways to bet (called "financial instruments," e.g., derivatives -- forwards, futures, options, swaps, collars). For example, they can bet that the prices of currencies, commodities, or stocks will rise or fall. Much of the spike in the price of oil last year was caused by betting. Millions of dollars worth of bets that the value of a company's stock will fall can then become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and a perfectly normal profit-earning company can be destroyed. Gamblers can buy insurance to cover the risks of their bets, and then bet on the ability of the insurance company to pay. These practices strike any normal person as total madness, but they are completely rational from the point of view of the financial elite, who will grab profit any which way they can.

In recent years, in the United States, the financial wing of the capitalist ruling class, which is now predominant, has further compounded the madness by getting rid of all government regulations over its activities. It has gotten the situation back to pre-World War I days when the Robber Barons had a completely free hand to do any damned thing they wanted to, the result being the Great Depression of 1929. So the Roosevelt wing

of the ruling class stepped in, back then, to save capitalism from itself with the watered-down US American version of the welfare state -- the New Deal. This is not likely to happen again, because there is no massive socialist movement to exert pressure from below, nor is the ruling class as divided. Capitalists have never been in such complete control of everything as they now are in the United States. They face no serious opposition.

What is the likely outcome of all this? We can see from the government's response to the crisis so far. All steps taken to date serve to cover the losses of the financial elite (wealthy gamblers). They get to keep the profits they made when the betting was good, and then have the government, using general tax revenues, cover their losses after the betting tanked. This does not mean that the banks are being nationalized. Quite



the contrary: it is the privatization of the government. Wall Street has simply taken over the US Treasury Department.

The end result will be the further concentration of capital into fewer very powerful corporations, and the further consolidation of ruling class power.

Anarchists can use this crisis to discredit capitalism and organize campaigns to dismantle it. A good beginning is the emerging Boycott Banks campaign. (See information at: <http://www.bankstrike.net/organizing-financial-crisis>).

Recommended Reading

On the Financial Meltdown

-Foster, John Bellamy, and Fred Magdoff, *The Great Financial Crisis* (Monthly Review Press, February 2009, 160 pages). This is the best radical analysis of the crisis so far.

-Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Depression: A Long-Term View," October 8, 2008, at: <http://www.binghamton.edu/fbc/243en.htm>. See also the long interview with Wallerstein by Jae-Jung Suh, "Capitalism's Demise?" January 10, 2009, online at: <http://english.hani.co.kr/popups/print.hani?ksn=332037>.

-Michael Hudson. A convenient archive of Hudson's essays on the crisis can be found at: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/>. Go to their author index, click on H, and scroll down to Hudson.

-Michel Chossudovsky, "America's Fiscal Collapse," March 2, 2009, online at: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=12517>.

-Doug Henwood, "Reflections on the Current Crisis -- Part Two," Left Business Observer #118, April 2008, online at: <http://www.left-businessobserver.com/Turmoil2.html>.

There is a link to Part One.

-Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis, "Notes on the Wall Street Meltdown," October 10, 2008, online at: <http://freeofstate.org/new/?p=4208>.

-Peter Gowan, "Crisis in the Heartland," New Left Review, #55, January-February 2009, online at: <http://www.newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=2759>.

-David Harvey, "Why the U.S. Stimulus Package is Bound to Fail," February 13, 2009, online at: <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/20559>. See also Harvey's March 13/15, 2009 essay on Counterpunch, "The Crisis and the Consolidation of Class Power: Is This Really the End of Neoliberalism?" online at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/harvey03132009.html>.

-Paul Bowman, "Financial Weapons of Mass Destruction," September 2008, online at: http://www.anarkismo.net/article/9850?print_page=true.

More Generally

Wallerstein, Immanuel *Historical Capitalism*
Hudson, Michael, *Super Imperialism*
Chossudovsky, Michel, *The Globalization of Poverty*

Henwood, Doug, *Wall Street*

Ingham, Geoffrey, *The Nature of Money*
Kindleberger, Charles, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes*

Hutchinson, Frances (and others), *The Politics of Money*

McNally, David, *Against the Market*

Human Trafficking

An Appropriate Response?

by Jeff Reinhardt

Since 2005, the Massachusetts Human Trafficking Task Force, a coalition of Boston police and federal agencies, has targeted self-employed escorts under the guise of fighting human trafficking. Recently, arrests have been made using craigslist sting operations, whereby police respond to ads online and entrap the solicitor.

On January 31, Boston police “investigating sexual exploitation” arrested an individual who posted on the “erotic services” section of craigslist and charged her with prostitution. On February 6, another online sting operation landed two women in their



(Above) Kids in Nepal, rescued from a brothel, learn street theater. (Below) Kids in Kolkata. Photos by the Emancipation Network, an international organization dedicated to fighting human trafficking and modern day slavery



James Fong, Boston undercover detective who targets prostitutes

mid-thirties in jail. On the following day, a street sweep operation on Blue Hill Ave resulted in the arrest of 10 individuals charged with prostitution. Not one of these individuals was part of a human trafficking operation.

The Massachusetts Human Trafficking Task Force is made up of several agencies, among which are the Boston Police Department, the state police, the FBI, the Department of Justice, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) Coalition, which is made up of over three dozen agencies. Besides law enforcement, the Task Force also works with non-profits, including Homes for Little Wanderers, Kim’s Project, Project Reach, and the International Institute of Boston. The Task Force was set up to aid victims of human trafficking and prosecute those guilty of it.

Yet there is little agreement on the difference between prostitution related to human trafficking and other forms of prostitution. The Trafficking Victims Outreach and Services Network, or TVOS, defines human trafficking as a crime that “involves the re-

cruitment, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining, by any means, any person for forced labor, slavery or servitude in any industry.” A huge percentage of those trafficked are used in Commercial Sex Exploitation (CSE), although domestic servitude and forced labor also make up large chunks. TVOS is a project of Matahari: Eye of the Day, which is an international organization that, along with the Emancipation Network, has tried to relieve the suffering caused by human trafficking across the world. The two organizations recently held a seminar at the New England Law School in February.

According to the Emancipation Network, there are approximately 27 million people being trafficked across the globe. The large majority of these people are women, comprising 98% of those trapped in CSE. Also, over half the trafficked persons in the world are under the age of 18.

Trafficking is a huge problem worldwide—Boston is no exception—and this is why the Massachusetts Human Trafficking Task Force was founded. But since 2005, when the Task Force started its work, it has arrested hundreds of self-employed providers of sexual services, rescued approximately 60 survivors, and prosecuted a total of 4 individuals for human trafficking. In other words, the Task Force has had some successes, but a larger amount of its time has been spent simply arresting those engaged in any form of prostitution.

When asked about the large amount of people arrested whom police believed were not victims of trafficking, Sergeant Detective Kelly O’Connell, who heads the Boston Police Department’s Human Trafficking Unit, responded that her unit uses such operations as an “intelligence gathering method,” although they still arrest and charge those caught. “We have laws to abide by,” she insists. O’Connell’s force also seeks to search out possible minors in prostitution, since they are most often victims of traf-

ficking. Her agency has not only found sex slaves, but domestic slaves who for years worked in affluent, distinguished households. Her unit has tried to help victims of trafficking, but this help has come at the expense of non-trafficked people who sell sex.

It’s true that prostitution is illegal in Massachusetts, as in most states. However, there is little done to protect the rights of people who prostitute during police operations, or to protect those in prostitution from predators.

A former escort involved in a group called Not For Sale: Survivors in Revolt explains the problem through her eyes: “If the police wanted to go out and stop human trafficking they could,” she said. “But rather they choose to just bust prostitutes... These people who need help to make their lives better just get arrested to help the police meet their quotas.”

While it could be argued that these craigslist stings were targeting folks who might be trafficking victims, it also has had an extremely adverse effect on those caught who were not running trafficking businesses.

Bliss Tyler is the director of the Transcend Program at Cambridge Cares about



AIDS. She has worked extensively with transgender people who exchange sex for money and has several clients and friends who have been negatively affected by these very raids. A friend of hers was arrested in 2005, during a sting operation in the Allston/Brighton area and the experience was devastating. The police were very abusive to her friend and tried to charge her with running a brothel. She spent 90 days in jail and was repeatedly harassed by police upon her release.

A lot of these stings in Allston and Brighton have also come at the hands of Detective James Fong, who is most often the "john" in these cases. In an egregious Boston Herald article from July 8, 2008, Fong describes the tough work of capturing "trannies and pimps." The article has put the Herald at odds with GLAAD, among many other organizations, and has still refused to apologize for it.

By far one of the most adversely affected communities from these sting operations is the transgender community. Many transgender individuals resort to selling sex because it is the only way they can make a decent wage, considering they are frequently discriminated against when they apply for other jobs. In Massachusetts there is no anti-discrimination policy against transgender people, which is one of the main factors pushing them into prostitution.

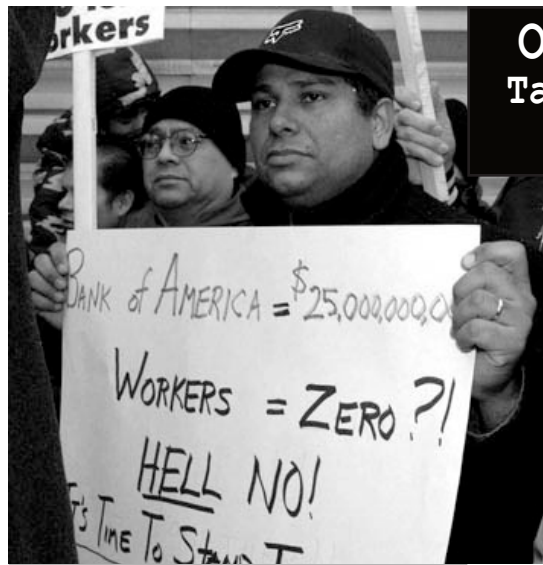
The Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) estimates that over 70% of transgender people live below the poverty line. "How do we make sure trans people have equal access to employment?" asks Gunner Scott, who heads the MTPC. He has been working hard at getting Massachusetts its own anti-discrimination bill for transgender people, which only 10 other states currently have. "People like to vilify sex work," says Scott. "But what are the solutions?" Some, he says, report feeling empowered by work in the sex industry, while others saw it as "the downfall of their lives."

Regardless, with no law protecting transgender people from discrimination, and no law protecting self-employed prostitutes from police abuse, many individuals' lives have been ruined by the police.

Many police stings also offer little help to those arrested, even if they wanted to get out of the industry.

"We cannot always put everyone on a pedestal and treat them like victims," said Detective O'Connell. "We'll battle the battle as best we can, but we are run and generated by numbers." It seems that, sadly, the important work of helping some victims of exploitation will cost others involved in commercial sex.

"We interviewed people who had been through raids," said Sienna Baskin an attorney from the Sex Workers' Project at the Ur-



Workers picket at occupied Republic Windows Factory in Chicago

ban Justice Center in New York. "And people who were in really violent, coercive situations... were not paid attention to, charged with prostitution, and returned to bad situations." The Sex Workers' Project gives legal aid to people in the sex industry and tries to wield legislative pressure on their behalf.

Often, it takes months of talking to a person to really find out if they are being trafficked. "Identifying a victim of trafficking is a really intensive process," said Baskin. "It's like being victim of domestic violence."

Baskin is similarly distraught about the recent increase in police busts. "This increased attention and focus on the sex industry because of the plight of human trafficking hasn't had results that actually helped victims of human trafficking." While some in the Massachusetts Human Trafficking Task Force might disagree, it is certain that those posting ads for commercial sex should be wary of an increase in police activity, especially on craigslist.

Ultimately, it will take a lot of work to curb the horrors of human trafficking. Likewise, it will be difficult to reform the laws around prostitution. One inspiring example, however, is the current legislation in Sweden. In Sweden, self-employed prostitutes cannot be charged with a crime, only pimps and johns. This law protects prostitutes and gives them more of a reason to speak out if they are in a bad situation. Perhaps with more legal leeway, we can begin to better combat human trafficking and to better educate police and professionals alike about a real solution to all forms of sexual exploitation.

Occupation USA Taking Action For A Better World

by Bruce

Over the past year, the United States has experienced numerous occupations of buildings by students and workers. This tactic has been virtually unseen in the US since the 60s. During these economically troubled times, it is imperative that we stand up and fight the oppressive hierarchies and power structures that exist everywhere under capitalism. The recent occupations offer a glimpse at what is possible.

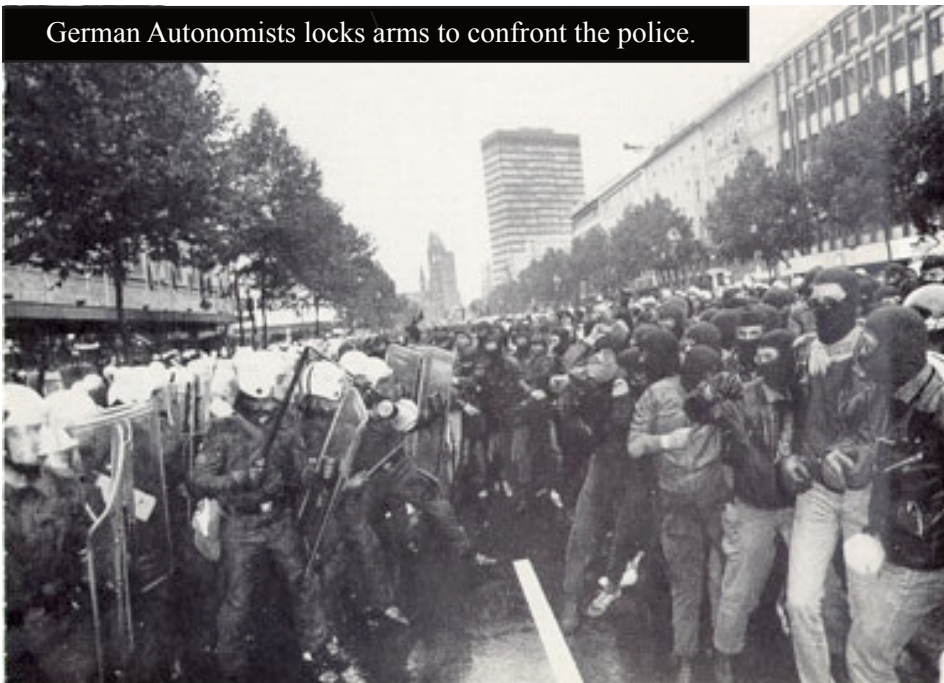
In May 2008, Evergreen State College students occupied the office of the vice president of Student Affairs after the SDS chapter was denied recognition, and thus funding. In December 2008, Republic Windows & Doors workers in Chicago occupied their factory after learning that it was being illegally closed on short notice without giving them adequate recompense. Days later, students occupied the New School in New York demanding the resignation of its President. In February 2009, SDS occupied an administrative building at University of Rochester in solidarity with Gaza. Later that month, students occupied NYU, demanding more student involvement in decisions made by the school as well as more transparency in NYU's dealings.

These occupations are noteworthy in how the groups involved acted directly against the power structures that marginalize them in the first place. While these rebellions are praiseworthy, they are, of course, not beyond criticism. The aim of these occupations was to issue a set of demands and continue the occupation until they were met. If the demands were met, then it was over. If the demands were not met, then it was ended by force. Thus, the occupations were seen and used as a means to an end. But why can't occupations be an



Students' Occupation at NYU

German Autonomists lock arms to confront the police.



end in and of themselves? In other words, the occupations could be used not only as a form of rebellion, but also as a glimpse of a future where things are run directly by the people, independent from any state or government. In the case of the Republic Windows and Doors workers, while they are setting back to work making energy efficient materials, they could also have taken over the operations of the factory without bosses, like so many worker self-managed operations in Argentina.

Looking beyond issuing demands, occupations could provide many things. Not only would occupations grant space to people's movements, the space would help increase our capacity. The occupied space would bring people together, create a focal point of revolutionary discourse and action, all while nurturing revolutionary spirit.

Throughout history, space has been at the center of revolutions. Space was pivotal for the Paris Commune in 1871, for agrarian workers in Spain in the 30s, for workers and students in the US in the 30s and the 60s as well as much more recent European struggles. In Iceland and Greece, over the past few months, strategic occupations of buildings acted as focal points of rebellion. These acts of rebellion were all focused around liberating space where people were able to thrive collectively and autonomously.

Germany in the 70s and 80s was particularly successful in doing this. The autonomous movement essentially involved the mass occupation of buildings and opening up squats and social centers, thereby creating a revolutionary base for action. With such a focused space to act from, they were able to begin creating another society within the shell of the old. Also, having that base

allowed them to more easily defend against repression as well; whenever the police attempted to evict a building, riots broke out and the protestors literally won, making the police retreat. This is just a glimpse back into a time not too distant from our own.

What's next? The recent occupations within the United States have been a step towards a better world, but have failed in standing ground beyond official capitulation to their demands. With broad international support, the Chicago workers were close to running the shop collectively, except the union boss was against it (seems like that always happens). Essentially, occupations not only provide a great special resource, they also reveal a crack into society, one that reveals an image of the future.

Onward! Together we can make the changes that politicians cannot.

The Smell of Her Own Burning Hair: 98 Years After the Fire

by Adrienne

It is an indisputable fact that poverty and exploitation of labor are worldwide problems that disproportionately affect women. Women, (im)migrant women and women of colour especially, are consistently given fewer opportunities, paid less, often sexually assaulted and generally forced to work under worse conditions than their male counterparts.

An egregious historical example takes place in 1911 in industrial New York City. The Triangle Shirtwaist Company was a sweatshop situated in the 8-10th floors of the fireproof Asch building. The owners of the

building rented out space to companies and left the business of hiring/managing workers in the hands of subcontractors who had a habit of paying pathetic wages to their workers and pocketing profits. This system provided optimum conditions for the super-exploitation of Triangle's 500+ workers, mostly Eastern European immigrants, and almost entirely young women. In addition to abysmal wages, this and other sweatshops featured an array of perquisites for their workers: 60-72 hour work weeks without overtime pay; unsanitary and dangerous working conditions; docked pay for being late, talking, or taking long bathroom breaks; being fired for having a negative attitude about any of it. The building's owners turned a blind eye.

It was pay day around closing time, Saturday 25 March, 1911, when a fire broke out on the 8th floor, possibly from a cigarette or faulty machinery. While unsuspecting girls were busy putting their coats on, the fire raged and quickly spread, fueling itself on the thousands of pounds of fabric in every room. The people on the 8th and 10th floors scrambled into the halls, elevators and stairwells and most were able to escape. When the workers on the 9th floor reached the exits, they found them locked. Some died trying to force the doors open. Others ran toward the rear fire escape, which collapsed, killing more workers, and left even more with one less hope for escape. Still others tried to climb down the elevator cables, but ultimately fell to their deaths in the elevator shaft. With their hair and dresses in flames, many women leapt from the 9th floor windows in desperation to die on the streets below. Within 15 minutes, 146 immigrant workers, from 11 year old Mary Goldstein to 22 year old Carrie Ozzo, lay dead in heaps on the pavement and in ashes inside the building. Many remains were never identified.

News of the disaster was met with sorrow and outrage by the general public. The city was forced to recognize the dangerous conditions that constituted the realities of thousands of their neighbors, all for the inhuman greed of rich, careless capitalists. Mass mobilization followed in churches, synagogues, and streets all over the city. From the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union to the Women's Trade Union League, an association of middle class white women, labor activists pressed for reforms and ultimately won a few. However, after originally being acquitted of any wrongdoing, the owners of the Asch building were eventually sued by 23 individuals. Settling three years after the fire, the owners were fined \$75 for every lost life.

In no way belittling the important work that was done by labor activists before and after the Triangle tragedy, it's problematic

that it took a disaster of such magnitude in their own city to make New Yorkers care about their neighbors. While impoverished women, men and children alike were regularly killed and mutilated at work, it wasn't until the New York Times published photos of stacks of young girls' bodies that the public could be brought to care.

It's remarkable to note how little has changed since 1911. Today, while the issue is met with apathy, most Americans are aware that sweatshops and dangerous working conditions are common in the global south. Our american apathy ensures that american attention will not be directed toward the plight of millions of impoverished young migrant women un-gainfully employed under horrific and frequently illegal conditions that often kill them. Similarly, our attention was not directed toward the slew of fire tragedies in East Asia in the 1990s. A Bangkok toy factory employing mostly young migrant rural women caught fire, under conditions eerily similar to Triangle, killing 183, seriously injuring 469, and charring the toys that were being assembled for American children. 93 died and 160 were injured in a Zhuhai textile factory fire, mostly migrant rural young women. Another toy factory fire in Shenzhen killed 87 young migrant rural women and injured 47. 72 in Dongguan died in a raincoat factory fire while 50 more were injured. 61 women died in a Fuzhou textile plant fire. China's Economic Daily correctly placed the blame on, 'the way some of these foreign investors ignore international practice, ignore our own national rules, act completely lawlessly and immorally and lust after wealth.'

Few, too, know that sweatshops are alive and kicking right here in the U.S. The conditions are bad enough to make one forget that the labor movement ever happened in this country. Now, like then, sweatshops attract undocumented immigrants and other workers in desperate need of employment. In 1997, the U.S. Department of Labor found that 67% of Los Angeles garment factories and 63% of New York garment factories violate minimum wage and overtime laws. 98% of Los Angeles garment factories have workplace health and safety problems serious enough to lead to severe injuries or death. The workers of american sweatshops are roughly 80% women.

As long as america-induced economic conditions have thousands of people worldwide vying for the same deadly job, and as long as their suffering, disease, and death are profitable, there's no end to it in sight. Human life means nothing to those who can profit from it, and no form of human life is less valuable to capitalists than that of an impoverished (im)migrant woman of color.

CALENDAR: GET INVOLVED

Every Monday:

Papercut Zine Library meeting, 7:30pm, 45 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge

First Tuesday of Every Month:

BAAM meeting, 7pm, Lucy Parsons Center, 549 Columbus Ave, Boston

Second Tuesday of Every Month:

Anarchist Black Cross meeting (defense and prison abolition group), 8pm, 45 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge

Every Wednesday: Free Radical Film

Nights, 7pm, at the Lucy Parsons Center, 549 Columbus Ave, Boston

First Sunday of Every Month: Rising

Tide Boston meeting, 5:30pm @ The Lucy Parsons Center 549 Columbus Ave, Boston

Second Sunday of Every Month:

2pm Industrial Workers of the World meeting, Lucy Parsons Center, 549 Columbus Ave.

Third Sunday of Every Month:

BAAM work and activity day, 1pm. Locations being arranged, email Jake at trenchesfullofpoets@riseup.net for info.

Every Friday:

Food Not Bombs free community meal, 4-6pm, Boston Common, Park St T Stop

The Triangle Factory Fire, March 1911.
Photo: www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/



April 1

Protest Alan Dershowitz, 3pm at the Lipke Auditorium, 2nd floor, Science Building, UMass Boston. Dershowitz has led the opposition against a recent divestment-from "Israel" campaign at Hampshire College. In 2002, Dershowitz published an editorial in the Jerusalem Post saying that, as a tactic to stop Palestinian resistance, the Zionist regime should destroy entire Palestinian villages.

April 2

Chiapas: Indigenous Struggle and Popular Alternatives to Capitalism with Jorge Santiago. 7:00pm at Encuentro 5, 33 Harrison Ave, floor 5. Boston, MA

April 4

A Special Evening with Robert Hillary King (a/k/a Robert King Wilkerson) of The Angola 3. 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. at The Dudley Branch Library, Roxbury. Lite refreshments will be provided. Come hear Robert Hillary King's powerful story about the Angola prison, an ex-slave plantation, and the Black Panther Party, & learn about the campaign to free the remaining 2 of the Angola 3, who are still serving life sentences. Event Sponsors: Jericho Boston and the New England Committee to Defend Palestine.

April 5

Robert Hillary King speaking and dinner. 6:00-8:00pm, at the Community Church Boston, 565 Boylston St., Boston

April 10

The FBI's war on Tupac and Black Leaders. The Author gives a talk, 7:00-9:00pm, at the Lucy Parsons Center. 549 Columbus ave, Boston, Ma

April 10

2009 NYC Anarchist Film Festival. Part of the New York Week of Anarchy. www.anarchistbookfair.net/filmfest.html

April 11

Confront Nazis in Boston. Keep an eye out, the scum are coming to our city for a concert. Let them know their blind hate is not welcome.

CALENDAR: GET INVOLVED

April 11-12

Third annual New York City Anarchist Bookfair. Exposition of books, zines, pamphlets, art, film/video and other cultural and very political productions of the anarchist scene worldwide, at Judson Memorial Church in Manhattan. www.anarchistbookfair.net/

April 14

Meeting of the Anarchist Black Cross of Boston. 8pm in the Papercute Zine Library at the Democracy Center, 45 Mt. Auburn st., Cambridge, MA.

April 18

F.A.D.G.E. Fest! Noon - 11:00pm at the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford, Conn. Feminism, Autonomy, Diversity and Gender Expression is a female-positive day of workshops, art and music, focusing on the female as a whole person, body and mind. There will be live music throughout the day as well as workshops and art vendors. This event is for all ages and genders. Your \$10 donation will benefit a local women's shelter. For more info: www.myspace.com/fadgefest.

April 18 and 19

The Boston Skillshare. at MIT's Stata Center (between Ames and Vassar Sts, Cambridge). The Boston Skillshare is an annual weekend event that brings people together to share practical skills. The emphasis is on action over theory, participation over talk.

We want to live with enthusiasm, so let us learn with vigor! Sliding scale donation. <http://bostonskillshare.org>

April 23

Community Meeting about the future of the Papercut Zine Library. 7:30 pm at the Democracy Center, 45 Mt. Auburn st., Cambridge, MA. Please come and bring your ideas if you would like to see Papercut, a free lending library of independent publications (with a HUGE anarchism section!) able to stay open for the long-run.

April 24

Critical Mass Bike ride. Meeting in Copley Square at 5:30pm.

April 25 and 26

Earth First! Roadshow in Boston. Come learn about the history and campaigns (strategies, skills, lessons learned) of a movement for ecological defense that's been active for 30 years. Details TBA. www.earthfirstroadshow.wordpress.org

May 1st

International Workers' Day. Celebrate workers' history. Go on strike, or call in sick, and we'll see you on the streets. This year's march will be in Everett. Event details TBA. www.bostonmayday.org/

May 16 and 17

Montreal's 10th Annual Anarchist Bookfair at the CEDA, 2515 Delisle, a short walk from Lionel-Groulx metro). Part of the month-long Festival of Anarchy, throughout the month of May 2009. These events bring together anarchist ideas and practice, through words, images, music, theater and day-to-day struggles for justice, dignity and collective liberation. All are welcome. The bookfair principles: <http://www.anarchistbookfair.ca/en/node/4>

May 23rd-25th

8th Northeast Anarchist Network Assembly, in Syracuse, NY. A regional network of anarchist groups and individuals from southern Canada to the D.C. area. Details to come. Learn more at: [ww.NeAnarchist.Net](http://www.NeAnarchist.Net)

In commemoration of the 6th anniversary of the Iraq War, here's a nice banner from Portland, OR.



HELP US SAVE TREES! (PAPER AND MONEY) FOR A FREE EMAIL SUBSCRIPTION, CONTACT JAKE: TRENCHESFULLOFPOETS@RISEUP.NET

Contributors to this month's issue:

- Adrienne
- Bruce
- James Herod
- Jeff Reinhardt
- Paul



What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is the theory and practice of a human society organizing without hierarchy, authority and oppression. This means that all people have equal access to the decision-making process and to the products of their collective labor. Anarchy can be described as true, direct democracy. It is horizontal: i.e. workers working together without bosses, neighbors organizing housing and neighborhoods without landlords, and people making decisions without politicians. There are many different ideas on how to get there and what exactly it will look like. We can talk all we want, but only a truly free and revolutionary people will be able to decide what their revolution will look like. So comrades, let's get to work!

WWW.BAAMBOSTON.ORG